



# Networking can help you do more with less

## Brian Stepowany



The term “doing more with less” has several meanings in today’s packaging society. To meet sustainable packaging goals, we are asked to achieve product integrity while using less packaging. We also have been asked to do more work with fewer people.

In 2012, many of the business practices and cutbacks that occurred a few years ago are still in place. We do not seem to be reverting back to the good old days. This means staffs are running lean and everyone is expected to do more with what they have available to them. And of course, failure or delays are not acceptable. From this we have learned to do more with less.

My simple answer for how to do more with less is to become good at networking. In my terms, networking means using your connections to solve your issue. Talk to co-workers, your co-workers at previous jobs, trade associations, and any other link that you can establish that will resolve an issue.

ized the value of networking and staying involved in the packaging industry’s associations that have developed during that time. Because of an attention to networking and the desire to stay connected, I have kept abreast of the various new technologies and practices that have been introduced recently to the packaging arena.

The network has been especially valuable over the past year or so as I transitioned from Kraft Foods to Bumble Bee. Creating coherent packaging specs at my new job was an early priority, and I’ve leaned on my network connections a lot in my efforts at making some headway. It’s been a matter of reaching out, listening, analyzing, and synthesizing. Without a network to tap into, it would have progressed much more slowly.

Making strides in sustainable packaging and exploring new packaging materials not commonly associated with the Bumble Bee brand—these, too, have been important objectives at my firm. Here again, the ability to bounce ideas off of someone else has been invaluable. The

*“To everyone involved in the packaging industry, I would recommend becoming involved in trade organizations to keep abreast of the new and improved technologies in the marketplace and to meet fellow packaging professionals. You will never know when you have a question, issue, or test procedure that you are not familiar with, and you can reach out through your network to get resolution.”*

I always joke about a true story of how I got some repairs done to my house in New Jersey when illustrating my point. A friend had asked how I got the leaks in my outside water lines fixed so fast. I told him it was a friend’s, friend’s, husband’s, cousin. And yes, his name was Vinnie, from Staten Island. But this example demonstrates how the use of networking can get the things done that you need in a cost-effective and timely manner. Networking needs to be used to solve problems in our packaging jobs.

Many times, I have had questions on packaging projects regarding topics that weren’t familiar to me. I would ask around until I found an expert in that field who could answer my question. I have had new-technology questions that no one within my company could answer, because they lacked the appropriate experience or knowledge. I went outside my company and asked friends or contacts in the industry about that topic. I cannot tell you how many times I have had questions that I needed an answer to or a test that I needed to be performed, and I was able to contact a friend or an association that could provide the right answers.

Through more than 28 years in the packaging industry, I have real-

pace of development in these two areas, especially in new plastic packaging technologies, can leave you a little overwhelmed if you try to go it alone. And why would you?

There are many trade organizations within packaging that specialize in various businesses and functions. One general packaging organization that covers the entire packaging industry and has additional committees and organizations within it is the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP). I have been involved with the IoPP since my graduating from RIT. The IoPP is a great place for overall packaging involvement and education. It provides many different ways to network, through its technical committees, Master of Knowledge sites, and other opportunities.

To everyone involved in the packaging industry, I would recommend becoming involved in trade organizations to keep abreast of the new and improved technologies in the marketplace and to meet fellow packaging professionals. You will never know when you have a question, issue, or test procedure that you are not familiar with, and you can reach out through your network to get resolution. **PW**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Brian Stepowany is a Certified Packaging Professional and Packaging Development Manager at Bumble Bee Foods. Contact him at [brian.stepowanyb@bumblebee.com](mailto:brian.stepowanyb@bumblebee.com). For more info about IoPP, visit [www.iopp.org](http://www.iopp.org).

